



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
2000 NAVY PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO

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Ser N973C/03037  
7 Feb 03

Dear Colleagues:

I began this week in Millington, Tennessee, as part of the Chaplain Corps Active Duty O-6 Selection Board. Choosing officers for promotion is always a challenging assignment, and I can assure you that all the members of this board—chaplains and line officers alike—bathed the process in prayer. I know that many of you were praying as well, and I thank you for that support, whether you were praying for us, or for the process, or for specific individuals under consideration.

But, of course, this was not a week to limit our prayers to the work of a Selection Board. Like many of you, we turned our attention on Tuesday from the work before us to the memorial service for the crew of *Columbia*. As the television cameras showed us the sea of grieving faces in Houston, I was reminded of a line from Oscar Wilde: "Where there is sorrow there is holy ground." And surely the grounds there at NASA headquarters became a holy place as families and friends and coworkers united in remembrance of seven wonderful, remarkable people.

And they were not alone. We saw the familiar faces of many national leaders, and heard our President offer stirring words of consolation. More importantly, we felt the presence of our all-sufficient God.

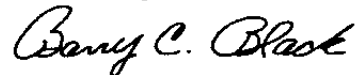
I felt that presence throughout the service, but never more than when two of our Navy chaplains spoke God's grace to millions of grieving hearts. As I watched our colleagues Harold Robinson and Gene Theriot, I felt a tremendous pride—but not just in them. Their very visible ministry that day was but one example of the countless sacred acts of loving service Navy chaplains perform every day. I am proud to be a Navy chaplain. I am proud to be a part of this corps of Navy chaplains.

And as I watched, and listened, and felt the healing power of their words, I found myself thinking about the incredible opportunities Navy chaplaincy provides to the servants of God fortunate enough to be numbered among us. As I listened to the beautiful poem Harold read to begin the service, I thought: Where else could you find the opportunity Navy chaplaincy

provides to comfort a nation? As I watched a rabbi and a Christian pastor stand side by side and recite from the Psalms together, I thought: Where else could you find the opportunity Navy chaplaincy provides to model such unity of purpose while still preserving the diversity of doctrine? As Gene offered the benediction, I thought: Where else could you find the opportunity Navy chaplaincy provides to be such a powerful spiritual intercessor? For "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." As the special sound and cadence of Hebrew mingled with the familiar phrasings of English in the ears of those present and in homes in Israel and India and wherever in the world people care about the loss of men and women as wonderful as those seven onboard *Columbia*, I thought: Where else could you find the opportunity Navy chaplaincy provides to have such a genuinely global impact? On Tuesday, our colleagues brought our Navy Chaplain Corps Vision to life: They "...united to deliver innovative, life-transforming service throughout and beyond the Sea Services."

And so do we all, with God's grace.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry C. Black". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

BARRY C. BLACK

Rear Admiral, Chaplain Corps  
Chief of Chaplains